

CHAPTER 4

IMPERATIVES, SUBJUNCTIVES, AND CONDITIONS

Imperative

A sentence with an imperative verb is usually a command, an order, a suggestion, advice or invitation and is formed of the verb base without endings for number or tense:

Open the window, please!

Commands can sound rude unless they are accompanied by markers of politeness such as *please*. There are no auxiliaries in commands except *do*, which must occur in negative commands. It may also occur in positive commands:

Don't stay too late, Mary! (negative command)

Do sit down! (emphatic or persuasive command)

Do take care of yourself!

Do can be followed by *be* only in commands:

Don't be noisy!

Although imperatives usually have no subject, we can say that there is an implied subject *you*. This is noticed when a reflexive pronoun or a tag question is used:

Be quiet, will you!

Behave yourself!

However, a subject *you* does sometimes occur in commands, being always stressed:

You just listen to me!

The first and the third person commands also occur, but less frequently than the second person commands. A first person command begins with *let* followed by *me* in the singular and *us* (often shortened to 's) in the plural:

Let me have a look at your drawing.

Let's have dinner.

A third person command has a third person subject, which is preceded by *let* in formal style:

Somebody let me out! (informal)

Let somebody else attempt this task! (formal)

Subjunctives

Subjunctive verb forms are little used in Modern English. We can distinguish three categories of subjunctive, according to Leech and Svartvik:

1. The *mandative* subjunctive is used in *that*-clauses after verbs referring to proposals, suggestions, requests and orders (*propose, demand, require, insist, suggest*), and expressions like *be necessary/obligatory/essential* etc. It has only one verb form, the short infinitive. Thus there is not an -s ending in the third person singular present tense, and past tenses are indistinguishable. It occurs mainly in formal style and especially in AmE. In other contexts, *that*-clauses with *should* + infinitive or *to*-infinitive are more common:

*His father suggests that he **take** the job.* (formal)

*His father suggests that he **should take** the job.*

*His father suggests him **to take** the job.*

2. The *formulaic* subjunctive also consists of the base and is used only in certain expressions like

Come what may...,

Suffice it to say...,

Be that as it may...,

Bless you!

*God **save** the Queen!*

*Long **live** the President!*

*Heaven **help** us all!*

3. The *were*-subjunctive uses *were* instead of *was* and occurs in clauses expressing condition or contrast and in subordinates after verbs like *wish*, and the conjunction *as if*. *Was* is also used and is more common in informal style:

*If she **were/was** to do something like that, I am not on her side.*

*He shouted at me as if I **were/was** deaf.*

*I wish I **were/was** on holiday*, but we use *Were I to find a treasure-trove,...* not *Was I to...* The subjunctive is also used after *if only, it's (high) time*:

*If only the sun **were/was** to shine now.*

*It's high time he **were/was** taught a lesson.*

Negatives are not used after *It's (high) time, It's about time*. The subjunctive can also be used after *lest*:

*He avoided mentioning her name **lest** her wife **be** upset.*

*I asked him to ring first **lest** the manager **were** away.*

☺Conditions

Conditions express imaginary actions that can, could or could have happened before other events can, could or could have happened. *If*, meaning 'provided that', is sometimes followed by *then*, which can be only implied:

*If something happens, **then** give me a call.*

If it's nice weather, we can go to the seaside.

Conditions are often introduced by *if*, but can be also introduced by other words, such as: *assuming (that)*, *as/so long as*, *even if*, *if only*, *on (the) condition (that)*, *provide (that)*, *providing (that)*, *unless* (used in Type 1), *suppose (that)*, *supposing (that)*, *otherwise (= if not)*, *but for + gerund/noun*, *and*, *or (else)*, *in case of/in the event of + present* (for the present) or *past* (for the past), *since* etc. *What if* and *Say* can be used in the same sense as *Let us suppose*:

What if/Say he wins the lottery and buys a new car? We can shorten a condition if we begin a new sentence with *if so*, *in that case*, or *if not* or if we continue with *in which case*:

She may not be at home in which case I'll come later.

He may be busy. If so (in that case) I won't stay long. Whether or not introduces alternative conditions:

Whether I feel well **or not** I'll do the job.

There are three main types of conditional sentences:

Type 1. will + **if + present:**

I will pass the exam if I work harder. (It is used to express real, possible or very probable situations in the present or future.)

Type 2. would + **if + past tense:**

I would pass the exam if I worked harder. (It is used to express imaginary situations contrary to the facts in the present. It is also used to give advice.)

Type 3. would have + **if + past perfect:**

I would have passed the exam if I had worked harder. (It is used to express an impossible condition, regrets or criticism.)

When the facts are/were always true we use present + present/past + past. In this case *if* can be replaced with *when(ever)* and is also called conditional Type 0.

If I wake up early I finish my work.

If it was raining we stayed indoors.

According to L. G. Alexander, we can use any tense sequence if the context requires it. Thus we can have:

Type 1 + Type 3:

If she is as rich as people think, she would have bought a bigger house.

Type 2 + Type 3:

If he knew how to handle it, he wouldn't have broken it.

Type 3 + Type 2:

If my uncle had been the manager, I would have a better position in the business.

Type 2 + Type 1:

*If Susan **didn't write** her name, nobody **will know** it.* (1994: 274)

Conditions can be sometimes implied, not directly introduced by *if*. Thus we have:

Type 1: *Given time, they'll probably agree.* (If we give them time, ...) *With luck, we can get there in time.* (If we have luck, ...)

Type 2: *To hear him talk, you'd think he was the Prime Minister.* (If you could hear him talk, ...); *But for her pension, she would starve.* (If it wasn't her pension, ...)

Type 3: *Without your help, I couldn't have done it.* (If you hadn't helped me, ...) *In different circumstances I would have said 'yes'.* (If circumstances had been different, ...)

Will and *would* are not normally used after *if*. When we want to express 1. a polite request or 2. insistence on doing or not doing something, we use both *will* and *would*. It is also used to express 3. doubt and not condition. In this case *if* means *whether*. 4. *Should* is also used after *if* to express something possible but not very likely to happen.

1. *If you **will** wait a minute, I will tell you the time of departure.*
2. *If you **will** miss (insist on missing) classes, you'll fail the exams.*
3. *I doubt whether he **will** be here on time.*
4. *If you **should** see Paul, give him my regards.*

In formal English *if* is sometimes omitted and then we have an inversion.

Were *he to give a lecture, everybody would be attending.*

Had *they promised more, their party would have been elected.*

Wish/if only + past tense is used to express the desire that we would like something to be different in the present.

I wish/If only *I didn't have to listen to you complaining.*

Wish/if only + past perfect expresses regret that something happened or did not happen in the past.

*He wishes he **hadn't married** that dreadful woman.*

Wish/if only + *would* is used for a polite imperative or shows annoyance about a certain activity.

*I wish you **would** write more legibly.*

*I wish/If only he **wouldn't** be always late for the meetings with the boss.*

!! After *I* and *we*, *could* is used instead of *would*.

*I wish I could (*would) go with you.*

Had better + short infinitive is used to give advice or warning in a particular situation and is stronger than *should* or *ought to*.

*You **had better** lock all the doors and windows at night.*

Would rather or *would prefer to* are used to express preference. When the subject of *would rather* is also the subject of the second verb, there are the following constructions:

1. *would rather* + present infinitive

I'd rather do the washing in the afternoon.

2. *would rather* + perfect infinitive

I'd rather not have told her the whole truth.

3. *would rather* + short infinitive + than (+ short infinitive)

I'd rather stay at home than go out with him.

When the subject of *would rather* is different from the subject of the second verb, there are the following constructions:

1. *would rather* + past tense (refers to present or future):

I'd rather Peter bought another car.

2. *would rather* + past perfect (refers to past):

I'd rather he hadn't sat on my hat.

When we want to express preference we can use *prefer*:

1. *prefer* + *-ing* + to + *-ing* (refers to general preference):

I prefer playing tennis to playing chess.

2. *prefer* + long infinitive + rather than + short infinitive (refers to general preference):

I prefer to read a book rather than watch a film.

3. *prefer* + noun + to + noun (refers to general preference):

Mother prefers meat to fish.

4. *would prefer* + long infinitive + rather than + short infinitive (refers to specific preference):

I'd prefer to go to Greece rather than (go) to Turkey.

EXERCISES

25. Put the verbs in brackets into the correct tense.

1. They would have built a new house if they ...*had had*...(have) enough money.

2. If you had told her the truth she ...*(not be)* upset now.

3. Were I you, I ...*(not drive)* in such bad weather.

4. Jill ...*(can)* find a job easily if she knew how to work on the computer.

5. Your son ...*(ruin)* his toy if he is so hard on it.

6. Mona*(drop in)* on us if she had known our new address.

7. If you like adventure stories, you ...*(enjoy)* reading this book.

8. Unless you ...*(know)* Spanish, you will find a hard time in Spain looking for a job.

9. You'd better own up, otherwise you ...*(be)* punished.

10. I ... (cannot) lend him my car even if he begged me a thousand times.

26. Choose the correct answer.

1. I can't find my purse. ~ If I were you, I ... *B*... in the wardrobe.
A shall look B would look C am looking
2. Where are my car keys? ~ If you ... them in the right place, you would have found them by now.
A had put B would have put C put
3. ... we get a taxi, we won't get to the station on time.
A Suppose B Unless C Providing
4. Can I go to the cinema with Doris? ~ If you ... your homework, you can go.
A finished B would finish C have finished
5. I am the last in my class. ~ Well, if you ... harder, you wouldn't have fallen behind so much.
A had worked B will work C have worked
6. When water boils, it ... into steam.
A will change B changed C changes
7. I'm going to the skating rink. ~ If I wasn't busy, I ... with you.
A came B will come C would come
8. Have you met Helen? ~ If I had, I ... her.
A would know B knew C would have known
9. Susan has caught a cold. ~ Well, if she ... properly, she wouldn't be in bed now.
A had dressed B have dressed C dressed
10. ... we miss the train, when does the next one leave?
A Providing B Supposing C When

27. Correct the mistakes.

1. If the weather will get ... *gets*... better, we'll go for a walk in the woods.
2. Sam should prefer to see Ann rather than Sue.
3. If I knew your address I would have sent you a postcard.
4. Unless you don't practise daily, you'll never become a good piano player.
5. Peter wishes he didn't miss the bus; now he has missed the train too.
6. John would prefer eating Indian food rather than Chinese.
7. You would better not tell everybody about your failure.
8. Supposing I invited you on a trip, will you accept?
9. I'd rather you hadn't been late when you come to my parties.
10. He wouldn't finish his report if you hadn't told him how to write it.

28. Finish the following sentences without changing the meaning of the sentences printed before them.

1. If I were her, I would not wear such a short skirt at the interview.

She had ..*better not wear such a short skirt at the interview...*

2. Should the prizes go down, we will buy a new car.

If

3. You won't be expelled provided you admit to your outrageous behaviour.

As long as

4. Suppose you phone her first?

Why

5. If Tommy were cleverer, he would have married Liz.

Were

6. If I had been him, I would have delivered the parcel earlier.

If I had been in

7. If she isn't more careful, she'll get hurt.

Unless

8. He filled in the application form because he wanted to get the job.

Since

9. If you should have any spare time, please go through my essay and tell me your opinion.

Should you

10. Study hard or you may fail the exam.

As long